

# The Apple Pickers



The first official day of apple harvesting in Urgway County was always a big deal. That's because the Pringler family, which owned Beezer Quality Orchards, one of the biggest fruit merchandisers in the area, always turned the drudgery of pome picking into a gala event. One year they stocked the trees with mariachis, who serenaded the fruit hunter-gatherers for hours with peppy tunes from south of the border. Another time they taped thirty pieces of eight to the undersides of thirty-one randomly selected apples, and told the pickers to keep whatever they found. Since each coin was worth thirty bucks, easy, there was a huge incentive for them to pick as much fruit as possible. And this year? Sadly, most of the regular apple pickers stayed away. They'd been warned that the local Homemaker Security officers were arresting undocumented farm workers in droves. Luckily, the entertainment the Pringlers had planned meshed perfectly with the job that family members now had to do. They had spent July and August studying with the Fliederer Family Circus's acrobats, and it took only a minor modification to turn their hand balancing routine into an elegant method for plucking apples off the trees. In fact, they picked eleven percent more product than did the Pringler's regular workforce, a consequence that matriarch Mona Pringler would have to consider before deciding whom to hire next season.